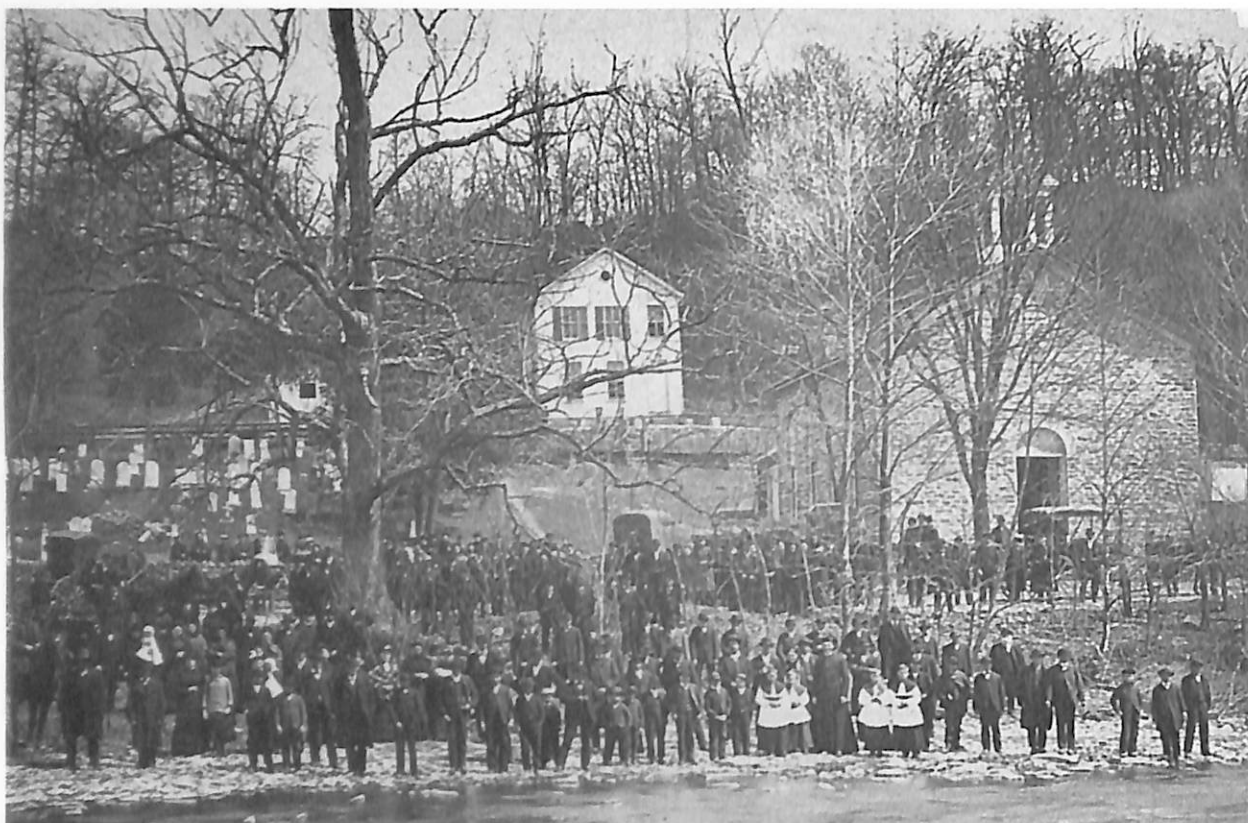




St. Philomena Church and its congregation. Circa 1885.

"If I was left free, I would not covet St. Louis, near Boston, I would remain in Stonelick alone."

Such was the devotion of Father Navarron to the parish of St. Philomena. He continued in his letter to inform the Archbishop that an anonymous parishioner had offered a donation of \$500.00, in cash, if the Archbishop "would and could bind in the name of the congregation, me and my successor, the pastor of St. Philomena, to read every year thirty masses for him and his family in perpetuity."

Whether the Archbishop "bound" the pastor to these conditions and whether the anonymous benefactor donated the promised amount is, too, uncertain. The financial records for the year of 1869 reveal no such entry. Was it made in 1868? Was it made in 1870, at the consecration of the new church? Were the conditions refused by Purcell? If so, why?

In any case, the new church was built. Parish life was off to a fresh, new and auspicious start at St. Philomena.

Chapter V

A Time of Peace and Growth

Letters of Father Navarron to the Archbishop, provided by the Archives of The Athenaeum, reveal a very much "business as usual" tone. On January 20, 1869, a financial report covering the period from April 1868 to January 1869 was sent to the Archdiocese. Among the notations can be found the fact that "Messieurs F. Cline, J. P. Craver, J. Yeager, U. Burgarn, and U. Walter were elected Committee to build the church." Thirty years after its founding, the French influence remained strong at St. Philomena.

The report continued that "Mr. F. Cline collected to pay the expenses of the building, from August 15, 1868 to January 1869, the sum of \$323.00. J. P. Craver \$299.17." The generosity of the parish was outstanding.

It also noted that "The ladies of the R. Altar pay 25 cents each month, they have at hand....\$22.15 to buy a Ciborium. From August 1868 to January 1869 they received \$68.70."

The report concludes with an interesting postscript "The congregation of St. Louis, near Boston, paid Mrs. Iuen—and—the trustees the sum of 25 dollars for my salary from June 11 to August 7, 1869." So, it appeared, the satellite parish at Boston was prospering as well. Two years later, in 1871, Father Navarron's report to the Archbishop was, again, a business-as-usual matter. On December 27, he wrote: "In the course of the present year I solemnized seven marriages, baptized 23 children (four more will be presented very soon to receive the saving grace in the month of February...) Many men, women, children received absolution and communion besides at Easter time and on (a) few Sundays and Holy Days per annum I had many for confessions and communion, among them many very young."

"In the two last years I had only four adult dead; they received the sacraments."

It was obvious that the parish was growing rapidly: 27 baptisms were mentioned, and only 4 funerals. The congregation was clearly young and prolific. Yet, with a note of sadness, the pastor reported further: "Last summer I taught the Catechism to my children, but they were few in numbers and very young. I delayed their first communion to next year." Today's C.C.D. teacher can easily relate to this report. The problems of attendance at Catechism classes are nothing new.

Nor had the differences between the Catholic community and its neighbors ended with the Civil War. The Protestant population apparently still regarded the Catholics with the suspicion of Papism, that is, that Catholics gave first civil allegiance to the Pope and not to the United States. Despite distinguished service records in the military, including some tens of thousands of Catholic casualties, the idea that Catholics somehow were a little less American than others persisted.

In truth, this idea was not entirely one-sided. Father Navarron, himself a French national, seemed to look upon those residing in the new world as belonging to two separate groups. In his letter